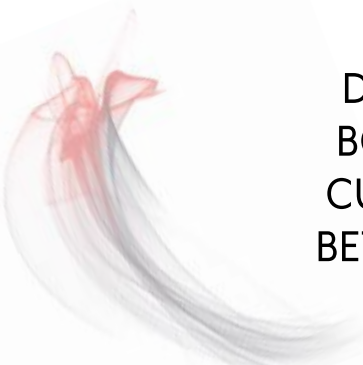




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Capturing the ESSENCE



WHILE THE NR GROUP CONTINUES TO DOMINATE THE GLOBAL INCENSE INDUSTRY, BOSS **ARJUN RANGA** IS DETERMINED TO GET CUSTOMERS TO APPRECIATE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FRAGRANCE AND AN INDULGENCE.

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Spicy or sweet, delicate or robust, your senses can't help but be uplifted by the pastiche of bouquets from the aromatic swirl of an incense. Cycle Pure Agarbathies, the flagship brand of NR Group, is recognised worldwide for the uplifting properties of its range of incense, providing aromas to awaken the mind, elevate the mood, liven the atmosphere, and lift the spirit.

While customers follow their nose, Arjun Ranga is focused on marketing the products across 70 countries. The third-generation member of the founding family behind the Group, Arjun is its Managing Partner, heading up N. Ranga Rao and Sons. It's the world leader in the manufacture of incense, known as 'agarbathies' to the locals, which is at the heart of the family business, conceived by his grandfather, N. Ranga Rao.

Cycle Pure, the primary brand of incense in the aerospace conglomerate NR Group, headquartered in Mysuru (Mysore), pioneered the incense industry, introducing heavy advertising campaigns to promote and create loyalty to the brand, rather than to a fragrance. "We introduced the concept of branding to the sector, rather than relying on a customer entering a store and seeking a particular fragrance. Loyalty to a brand in our industry was unheard of before. Our branding has created an indulgence, not just an offering to God." »



**“PEOPLE REACT TO THE WAY YOU TREAT THEM,
SO YOU TREAT THEM WITH GRACIOUSNESS ...
AS AN ORGANISATION, WE ARE ENTIRELY
PROFESSIONAL, BUT WE RUN ON FAMILY
VALUES. THEY ARE THINGS I HOLD DEAR.”**



Cycle Pure's founder, Ranga Rao was a spiritual man with a strong head for business, cultivated at age nine when he stepped up to care for his mother and grandmother after the death of his father. Young Rao sold biscuits to his classmates and wholesale sweets to a shopkeeper outside his school. It was more than 20 years later when, inspired by India's independence in 1947, the entrepreneurial bug bit again and, now married with a family, he took a big leap of faith.

"He took all his savings, which were quite paltry, and moved to Mysuru to start an incense business, the only one in the region," Arjun explains. "Being a spiritual man, he felt there was a need for it. Besides, the then Maharaja of Mysore was a connoisseur of fragrances, so Grandfather saw an opportunity."

That opportunity evolved into the NR Group, boasting a portfolio of diverse companies including Ripple, Nesso, Vyoda, Senzopt and Rangsons, offering products ranging from fragrances and natural essential oils, to aviation tubes and electronics.

Along with Arjun, four other grandsons head companies within the Group, with Cycle Pure remaining its main pillar. As well as incense and other prayer products, the Group produces home fragrances and air fresheners within its air care range.

"We create all our own fragrances and have a library of around 500," Arjun says. "We are pursuing an aggressive growth track over the next few years, with our biggest push into home fragrances with the IRIS and Lia brands and the Stop-O range within the air freshener category. This is apart from our

"Trust, sincerity, mutual understanding, and a commitment to growth have defined our relationship with NR Group for more than two decades. Pattabi is honoured to be a partner of NR Group in their journey to excellence." – Pattabi Enterprises

range of prayer products with the Om Shanthi Pure Puja brand."

Arjun continues, "We are also focused on capturing different markets. In the West, Eastern practices are becoming more popular. South America, for example, which has only a small Indian population, is a potential market and an area of growth for us."

NR Group has used cutting-edge technology across all its portfolios, an investment which, while beneficial, comes with potential consequences. Arjun explains that the Internet of Things influences its supply chain management systems, and its Pure Pray app streamlines how customers purchase prayer kits or book temple visit slots, reducing employee intervention. "Using cutting-edge technology is a huge step forward for us, but is also our biggest challenge," he says.

"Another challenge is finding the right kind of people to fit our family culture, but who can help us grow as well. Each person's perception is different, so growing aggressively means values we hold dear may be lost when hiring. That's a fear I have about the quality of our recruitment, in particular of leaders. They must appreciate our company values."

Those values promote wellbeing within Arjun's company as much as externally through the company's products. He strongly believes the best way to foster a healthy corporate culture is by example.

"I'm a very hands-on leader. I strategise to help every key performer achieve their objectives and goals. We're not a 'hire and fire' kind of company. While we're very aggressive towards achieving results, we're also understanding if results are not achieved. That is something I'm sometimes at conflict over with others." ■

The NR Foundation was established in 1988 to support the Ranga Rao Memorial School for Disabled. It's a free, fully residential girls' school in Mysuru providing up to 100 visually impaired students with education up to Class 10 and preparation for higher studies at college. The foundation also offers a scholarship program, vocational training for women and supports art and cultural events.